DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 061 206 TE 002 848

AUTHOR Redd, Virginia P.
TITLE Innovations in English Education: Variations on What Theme?
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 16p.; Address delivered at KCTE Fall Meeting, Lexington, November 1971
JOURNAL CIT Kentucky English Bulletin; v21 n2 p6-21 Winter 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Innovation; *Educational Objectives; English Curriculum; *English Education; *Reading Instruction; Self Actualization; *Teacher Education; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

The basic themes that polarize English educators today are discussed, and the province of the English teacher and the English curriculum is defined. The three basic themes that have polarized authorities are in English education much the same as in all other areas. Is the purpose of teaching English (1) to impart useful skills, (2) to encourage intellectual pursuits, or (3) to guide the individual toward self-discovery and self-realization? Five essentials for preparing English teachers are proposed: (1) A realistic balance of courses in literature, language, and in speech and writing; (2) At least one course in the history and development of language; (3) A minimum of two courses in the structure of English, exploring and comparing the various grammars of English; (4) Not less than two courses in the teaching of reading, including diagnostic and remedial techniques as well as approaches to developmental reading; and (5) A more realistic program for professional preparation in which the emphasis would be on field work where theory and practice are combined. The province of the English teacher and the English curriculum is defined as: (1) to provide through literature enlightening experiences; (2) to approach the teaching of language with the surety that diversity is the rule in language usage; (3) to help the student perceive speaking and writing as conversation with an audience; and (4) to view the teacher's role as enabling the student to develop his own generalizations and values. (DB)

Kentucky English Bulletin
Vol. 21, No. 2, Winter
1972.

INNOVATIONS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION: VARIATIONS ON WHAT THEME?[1]

VIRGINIA P. REDD, *Specialist in English*

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At any formal meeting of educators nowadays, it is a foregone conclusion that the purpose of their coming together is to take a fresh look at the curriculum, to assess its strengths and weaknesses, and, above all, to search for innovations: new sequences, new structures, and perhaps even new content to replace the old. The basic assumption, it seems, is that because the old sequences, structures, and content are not working, they obviously are improper or incorrect. Those of us who consider ourselves more enlightened quickly find and follow the latest trend, only to discover within a few weeks or months or years—depending upon our tenacity or intestinal fortitude—that what we have thought was new and good and right hasn't worked either. Beaten and somewhat frustrated, but absolutely undaunted, we "pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and start all over again" on our annual or semi-annual treks in search of those medicine men whose magic elixers will cure all the ills of the curriculum.

I can well imagine that many of you at this point are harboring vague suspicions that you are about to have the dubious distinction of seeing and hearing first hand from something that just crawled out from under a horn book. Let me quickly allay your fears. I have no intention of damning any "innovative" practices except as they deserve condemnation. I do condemn our tendency to become our own enemies by seeking innovation for its own sake—by constantly changing the outer trappings of the curriculum without ever bringing into focus the really basic question we must answer: What do we teachers of English envision as our role in helping to develop in students the capacity to face and cope with their world, both now and in the future?

This philosophical question has no simple answer; as a matter of fact it has no *single* answer, for it must be confronted by each school district, each school, each English department, and each individual English teacher before any sensible decisions about curriculum can be made.

Try if you can to imagine the impact of today's world upon the minds of the young. In their immediate view the Establishment "squares" and the Hippie-Yippie generation square off in the streets of Chicago; the Hawks and the Doves peck away at each other from their perches on opposite branches; Black Panthers and White Citizens Councils fortify themselves behind their urban and suburban barricades; ultra-conservatives blow up school buses and ultra-liberals blow up con-

[1] An address delivered at the KCTE Fall Meeting, Lexington, November, 1971.

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servatives in fanatical struggles over their ideologies; and the spectacle of the Hoffmans (Abbie versus the Judge) becomes symbolic of the polarization that characterizes our way of life. In their peripheral view students are conscious of what Sir Winston Churchill described as "two mighty forces baying across the ocean." Despite efforts at easing tensions, the fact remains that one push of The Button on either side spells doom for us all.

Underneath it all, in a context of utter confusion and despair, these young minds are forced to grapple with staggering questions requiring immediate answers. Do they accept the split-level mentality (real or imagined) of the Establishment or do they join the ever growing ranks of those who experience the euphoria (real or imagined) of tuning out, turning on, and dropping out? Do they consign themselves to the ranks of the "straights" and follow an unswervingly rigid moral line (the hypocrisy of which often is never revealed until the "Night Miss Nancy Ann's Hotel for Single Girls Burns Down" or at the local meeting of the Harper Valley P.T.A.) or do they join the liberated ranks of the sexual swingers? Finally, on the most practical level, as they mature, many young people must decide whether to terminate their formal education after secondary school or join in the rat race with those trying to squeeze through the doors of the "right" colleges, thereby delaying for four years their inevitable queuing up in the unemployment lines.

The picture appears dismal indeed. In this time of accelerated change, of shifting political institutions in which the extent of commercial development determines world leadership, and in which the desire for national pre-eminence leads to international conflict and war—in this whole new world that is upon us we are forced for the sake of survival to answer the essential question whether the traditional educational stereotype fits or whether the educational ideal should be revised. The dilemma facing all educators is summed up in the following quote:

> As things are . . . mankind are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing: no one knowing on what principle we should proceed—should the useful in life or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge be the aim of our training; all three opinions have been entertained. Again, about the means there is no agreement: for different persons, starting with different ideas about the nature of virtue, naturally disagree about the practice of it.

Now in seeking the source of that quotation, one will search in vain the textbooks or speech texts of current educational philosophers; actually it was written about twenty-five hundred years ago by Aristotle in his *Politics,* Book VIII, Chapter 2. The conditions of current times which I alluded to earlier are quite similar to those that characterized

Aristotle's time. In his clear vision, Aristotle delineated for his time and ours the three basic themes that have polarized authorities in education.

During the past three weeks as I have prepared for this presentation, I have been more conscious than ever of how these three basic themes permeate controversy in education at all levels. Just last Friday, for example, I attended the Maryland Governor's Conference on Higher Education. One of the eminent professors who addressed our group session on the nature of higher education presented what I am sure he felt was a novel explanation of the current dilemma in higher education. Using his chalkboard diagram and affecting his most learned professional style, he suggested three alternative approaches to higher education. We may, he suggested, base the college curriculum on self-concept or self-image, on academic knowledge for its own sake, or on job-oriented goals. Quite a novel idea from one latter day Aristotle!

In English education the pattern of controversy is much the same as in all other areas. Is the purpose of teaching English (1) to impart useful skills, (2) to encourage intellectual pursuits, or (3) to guide the individual toward self-discovery and self-realization?

Behaviorists suggest that there are clearly identifiable and demonstrable skills that are the ends of education, that these skills are measurable and, if attained, represent a successful curriculum. One must agree that skills are essential; the natural point of disagreement at any given time would be which skills are most essential for whom. I have had the shattering experience of sitting on a curriculum advisory committee which spent no less than two agonizing years working out a sequence of English skills only to be ordered later to restate those skills in behavioral terms, presumably because everyone is doing it that way. The result was predictable: back to the drawing board for two more years. The usefulness of this exercise in finding just the right verb from the list to fit each objective can be equal only to that of a discussion of the number of angels that might arrange themselves comfortably on a pin head. Now that the masterpiece finally has been completed the group will quite likely spend another year or so deciding what to do with it.

In another related experience I have witnessed the waste of hundreds of thousands of dollars of federal money in an ill-conceived project related to the use of behavioral objectives in writing learning activities with skill hierarchies built in and stated "behaviorally" for students. The following is a quoted "terminal objective" from one of the obviously useless products: "You will be able to rewrite sentences as kernel sentences with precise adjectival and adverbial modifiers added." This, mind you, for students in a school where the economic level is barely within survival range and where the drop-out rate can be estimated

at somewhere between 30 and 50 per cent. Frankly, if this kind of material is all that the students are offered *in* school, they can do better in the streets. Furthermore, if my experiences with writing behavioral objectives are typical, I would gladly contribute a portion of my salary toward the establishment of a relocation program for California refugees.

The alternative view of English as an academic discipline with a specific content of its own certainly is not new. The publication by the Commission on English of *Freedom and Discipline* signaled a return to the academic, knowledge-centered curriculum and was a direct result of a tidal wave of concern—the Sputnik hysteria—which, via NDEA, swept all subject areas. The contribution of that approach to the English curriculum was a valuable one in that it reminded us that we must concern ourselves with language, literature, and composition. In practice, however, it has caused some of us to lose sight of the fact that we are teaching language, literature, and composition *to students,* to diverse human beings with equally diverse needs that cannot be entirely subordinated to the logic of the subject matter.

The self-concept or self-realization view is difficult to describe because it is by nature unrestricted, uninhibited, and unstructured. Creativity is at its core. Such devices as improvisational drama, role-playing, and basic oral emphases make up much of its content. Literature and writing are viewed largely as devices for self-expression and enlargement upon one's experiences. Media such as film, radio, television and living theatre loom large as devices for a McLuhan-inspired mind-expanding trip. No one can deny the importance of self-expression or self-realization but one wonders if there isn't a dangerous fallacy in assuming that students possess the maturity and acumen to select from these experiences that which will most benefit them now and in the future. There is no question that these mind-blowing devices are essential and effective in getting students turned back on to English; what needs much more exploration is the question of *how* these devices may be utilized further to provide students with essentials for effective use of all modes of communication—which is the basic function of English teaching. Unbridled creativity without direction or purpose is about as effective (and valuable in the long run) as an uncut, unpolished rock which has the makings of a flawless gem but never reaches its potential because the jeweler sits back and waits for the rock to transform itself.

The three basic assumptions about English teaching that we have examined are not and should not be mutually exclusive. Their variations in practice are myriad and depend to a large degree upon whim. The contrasts, contradictions, and conflicts they inspire deserve careful scrutiny as much now as they did in Aristotle's time. How we as classroom teachers recognize, sort, apply, and do variations upon these themes has become crucial to our survival as a discipline.

Decidedly in Aristotle's favor as far as I am concerned was his candid admission that "no one knows on what principle we should proceed." To say that *our* latter day Aristotles are lacking this inherent wisdom is to be kind; to characterize them as modern Pied Pipers with their own vested interests probably is less kind but infinitely more accurate. I have an inherent distrust of the motives of anyone who announces that he has designed *the* English curriculum for a wide range of students. I am extremely leery of the "idealist" who finds it convenient and lucrative to do his own thing and let the students do theirs in a totally unstructured system which begins and ends with the kind of creativity that involves "opening the students up" and not taking the extra steps necessary to lead the students somewhere after this opening-up process occurs—and then to grind his own axe publicly when the axe falls on him. Most of all, I am frightened and appalled by the machinations of the mind of the performance-contracting "specialist" whose pie-in-the-sky promises are fulfilled by drill-teaching the very test items that comprise the evaluation of his cure-all program. All of the types mentioned are, in varying measure, motivated by the lure of cash and leave open to serious question the sincerity of many so-called "innovations."

In the face of the persuasive tactics of the purveyors of one philosophy or another, we have too often approached the teaching of English with wisdom comparable to that of the blind men and the elephant. If our particular Pied Piper happens to be a linguist, then our students will take apart sentences in a structural linguistics or transformational grammar text instead of a traditional one. If he is a media man, then our students become professional film critics and producers. If he is hawking humanities, then we join the music, art, history and other departments in developing a series of round-robin lectures to be presented to our captives. And if he is a behaviorist, we collapse in exhaustion from the task of formulating statements of goals before we are able to devise means to reach those goals.

Nay, the tale grows worse. Individualization of instruction, a concept both necessary and possible in *any* kind of grouping or lesson format, boils down to having each student march at his own cadence through the pages of a workbook, programmed text, or learning package. The introduction of student electives results in one or the other or both of two evils: either the curriculum content is snipped into meaningless bits and pieces without attention to skills or sequence or the tail wags the dog in that the whims of students and teachers determine what is offered and how soon it will die.

Some of our errors in judgment border on the criminal and are truly disastrous because of irreparable damage done to students. At the elementary level our zeal for trying out innovative reading and language programs has resulted in having students exposed during their

first three crucial years, to such a variety of approaches to the teaching of reading (including linguistic, linguistic phonetic, traditional basal, programmed reading, and language experience) that the child is hopelessly confused and handicapped and, though normally intelligent, enters the upper elementary grades and junior high or middle school with anything ranging from a primer to a third or fourth grade reading level. To compound the problem, many teachers in the upper elementary grades begin to de-emphasize reading instruction, and in secondary schools the English teachers (and those in other disciplines) consider the teaching of reading beyond their purview. They simply throw up their hands in frustration when confronted by a class of poor readers, label them as stupid or basic or slow learners, and keep them busy pushing pencils in aimless drill-type busy work until they march across the stage at graduation time and receive a high school diploma. This practice means that we have placed an official stamp of approval on one more group of functional illiterates.

For the true slow learners our injustices are not only criminal but sinful. These students are absolutely capable of learning; their problems most often relate to a different way of perceiving—to a cognitive style that is action-oriented rather than verbal. Yet supposedly well-intentioned teachers continually subject these students to a learning environment remarkable for its emphasis upon the sterility of words rather than reality, because these teachers often are themselves incapable of perceiving the reality represented by the words they deal with. In most instances this verbalism is twice removed from reality because it deals with written rather than spoken language. We obviously have not heeded the admonitions of earlier educators like Comenius that real learning cannot take place until we learn first to start with reality or an approximation thereof and move toward that most abstract realm of words. Unfortunately the verbal realists die slowly!

For many years, our profession has been able somehow to weather criticisms such as those I have been leveling. Such talk was considered "in-house talk" that we didn't air in polite company. Most of our problems conveniently were swept under the rug or out of the door with our steady succession of drop-outs or failures. But now, thankfully, times have changed. No longer are we allowed the luxury of being the only profession in the world that [illegible] measures its progress in terms of dollars and cents expended. The cry of accountability is heard in the land and the public justifiably looks to us for a fair return for those expenditures.

Our responses to these cries for accountability range from the mildly ridiculous to what would be hilarious but for the tragedy of it all. Multi-million dollar wastes of money have occurred in ill-conceived and poorly administered programs that have provided *things* rather than improvement of instruction for students. Our investments have

been in material resources rather than in human resources. We have shuffled and reshuffled the content of English without any significant changes in the product we turn out. What we have missed is so patently clear that one must wonder if we "have our heads on straight," to use street jargon. What we cannot seem to realize is that in much the same way that one cannot become a virtuoso before he learns to play from a musical score, an English teacher cannot be truly innovative without certain basic competencies which include an understanding of human learning patterns and the ability to apply techniques basic to the teaching-learning process.

At the risk of being considered presumptuous, arbitrary, and perhaps authoritarian, I propose to suggest a more substantial approach to solving our problems than our current frenetic pursuit of the new. Certain basic elements, competencies, and strategies, I believe, represent the real score, the real theme as it were, which must permeate our efforts regardless of the structure, content, or sequence of any English program we devise or adopt. And at the outset, let me suggest three basic areas that must be given top priority.

No program can succeed without competent teachers. We build multi-million dollar complexes based upon the open space concept (for example, one proposed in Baltimore will hover dangerously close to the $17 million dollar mark). We change the outer structure from junior high to middle school, and we offer elective and phase elective programs and "magnet plans" designed to stimulate student interest. And into these ultra-modern structures and programs we send ill-prepared teachers whose ability to kill Shakespeare is exceeded only by their positive genius for turning a Ray Bradbury or Ferlinghetti into a collossal bore!

Let us not be misled by the current over-supply of so-called qualified teachers. Because college programs are generally lacking in realistic approaches to what teaching involves, few beginning teachers are really prepared for the traumatic experience of entering the classrooms. Caught in the crossfire between the English and the Education departments, the student is forced into a program top-heavy with highly specialized literature courses and interlaced with theoretical courses in education and methodology taught by professors who in many cases have had no experience in a classroom other than at university level. Some interesting rearrangements of structures of teacher preparation programs are occurring, but unfortunately change is slow in coming. The most promising of these changes involves cooperative efforts between colleges and school systems to develop student teaching centers.

From my perspective of years of experience as a teacher, English department head, vice-principal, and now English supervisor, I would propose the following essentials for preparing English teachers:

1. A realistic balance of courses in literature, language, *and* in speech and writing. Included in the literature requirement would be appropriate courses in ethnic literature and a balance of traditional and contemporary literature.
2. At least one course in the history and development of language.
3. A minimum of two courses in the structure of English, exploring and comparing the various grammars of English.
4. Not less than two courses in the teaching of reading, including diagnostic and remedial techniques as well as approaches to developmental reading.
5. A more realistic program for professional preparation in which the emphasis would be on field work where theory and practice are combined. For example, the entire student teaching experience could be organized so that during an initial period the basic methods could be taught and supplemented with extensive observations and micro-teaching experiences. As the student gains proficiency he can be worked gradually into more independent experiences until he is able to take full command of a teaching schedule. As the practical experience progresses, the methods course should become more of a seminar/practicum in which ideas are developed, used, refined, and evaluated.

The above proposal implies of course that the total structure of teacher education programs must change and that particular vested interests of various segments of the college community must give way to reality.

Because there are some needs that cannot be anticipated or met by pre-service college programs, it is imperative that strong staff development programs be developed for the continuing growth of teachers. In-service staff development, in its broadest context, cannot be provided in the university classroom, because problems of staff development are closely interrelated with problems of the specific school or district being served. Nor can the answer to staff development be provided through a transfer of the university classroom to the school cafeteria. The best staff development programs exist at regional, school, and/or departmental level and stress cooperative planning, intervisitation, lesson observations with follow-up conferences, and planning conferences.

If any endeavor deserves to be called a workshop, then the emphasis must be upon productivity on the part of participants rather than on the continual filling of notebooks with theory that is never again referred to and rarely put into practice. Participants would be required to produce teaching materials and suggested approaches that would be immediately usable in the improvement of instruction. These *work* shops would include examination and demonstration of new materials and techniques and meaningful use of resource persons who have a knowledge of the particular situation. Above all others, the most significant element of such a staff development program would be released time during the school day so that participants can work under optimum conditions. There is of course the factor of cost to consider for such a program. Teacher aides or substitutes must be hired and, ideally,

trained to fulfill their duties, so that the time the regular teacher is taken away from classes will be spent productively. It is a never-ending source of bewilderment to me that those of us concerned with staff development must always be placed on the defensive to justify for example, a minimal expenditure for a system-wide staff development program when approval easily can be won for a ten to fifteen million dollar expenditure for an air-conditioned, carpeted, well-stocked, well-furnished building staffed with poorly prepared teachers.

II

At this point in time, second only to general staff development is the development of reading competency for students at all levels. The English teacher at secondary level no longer can look upon reading as the domain of the primary grade teacher. As a matter of fact, it has become clear that teachers in all academic disciplines must help their students improve their reading and study skills and thereby achieve greater comprehension of subject matter content. The vast majority of teachers in all subject areas, including English, have had no formal or informal training in the teaching of reading, and if my home state is typical of most states there is little hope that the situation will change. In Maryland, for example, there is no state certification requirement that any teacher have a course in the teaching of reading. This includes elementary teachers who are responsible for the initial reading instruction of pupils. Some may question the value of such a course because of the many divergent views about the teaching of reading. The fact is that despite this divergence, much is known already about teaching reading that can be of help to teachers and through them to their students. I was most interested to read the section of the report of the 1970 White House Conference on Children which dealt with the Right to Read. A most significant recommendation states: "Since all teachers, from preschool through college, teach reading in one way or another, all should be trained to teach it." The report further states five key areas which must receive priority attention in order to strengthen the Right to Read effort:

1. Basic and applied research into the teaching and learning of reading,
2. Teacher education programs, particularly in the teaching of reading,
3. Availability and accessibility of appropriate materials,
4. The importance of pre-school and out of school activities to cognitive and affective development,
5. Application of modern management principles to assure the best use of resources.

In the English classroom, the teaching of reading is absolutely crucial. For the poor student, diagnostic and remedial techniques must be applied; for the average student reading at level, developmental

approaches are necessary; and the capable student needs techniques which will increase the efficiency of his reading. Those of us who wish to dwell only in the "Palace of Art" consider it our mission to develop only literary concepts. We draw sharp lines of distinction between teaching reading and teaching literature and place ourselves on the right side of the line.

Actually, the distinction between a reading lesson and a literature lesson is not difficult to make at the extreme ends of the spectrum. Basic reading comprehension and literary interpretation are vastly different and easily distinguished. Between these extremes, however, it is sometimes almost impossible to draw a line which distinguishes one from the other. Probably it is better not to try to differentiate at some arbitrary point, but rather to view skills in literature as not different from but as extensions of basic reading skills. Literary interpretation, for example, cannot occur without basic comprehension. In approaching each lesson with a particular class, the teacher must make several decisions:

- Is the material appropriate to the ability and maturity level of the class?
- Does the material lend itself to an approach that involves mainly developmental reading, mainly literary interpretation, or a combination of the two?
- Which of the possible approaches is most suitable for the class? Will a developmental approach bore them or will a purely literary approach be over their heads?

If every teacher of English were familiar with just the basic reading comprehension skills and their counterparts in the area of literature, vast improvements in teaching in both areas would be possible. For example, the student cannot interpret total literary meaning or purpose without understanding the *literal* meaning of a selection; he cannot draw inferences about character development and motives without the basic skill of adding up facts to form a generalization; and, above all, he cannot deal with extended meanings through levels of usage, connotation, denotation, tone, and figurative language without the basic skill of gaining meaning from context. Viewed from this vantage point, the teacher of English cannot deal with the affective areas of literature without dealing first, however quickly, with the cognitive aspects of reading.

Every teacher of English must be able to follow the basic steps in a developmental reading lesson whether he is dealing with one student or forty, in traditional classroom or in a free-wheeling, open space area. He must be able to see clearly the essential skill to be developed, select a basic story or text suitable to the interest and ability of the student, and clear up that vocabulary which might represent a barrier to comprehension. He must motivate by relating the student's experiences to

the kind of experience to be encountered in the reading, prepare the class for reading by asking a clear purpose-setting question—a broad, all-encompassing question that focuses upon the main point of the story—and he must make effective use of his time during the guided silent reading period. He must have in reserve the kind of probing questions that will help to reinforce the student's understanding of what he has read; and, above all, the teacher must be able to conjure up logical follow-up activities that will help the student to internalize what he has dealt with in his reading. No textbook, programmed package or other artificial structure is an adequate substitute for the role the teacher must play in developing reading skills.

III

The elimination of racism and bias in the teaching of English is third in priority only to the extent that it cannot begin to be realized without basic teaching competence. Most of us are familiar with the report of the NCTE Task Force on Racism and Bias, approved at last year's Atlanta convention. The 400-member board of directors approved a statement of criteria for teaching materials which calls for an end to the practice of ignoring, misrepresenting, or giving token attention to literature representing the contributions of ethnic and racial minorities. This statement is long overdue and occurs at a time when many publishers already have begun to realize that is economically unwise to continue the practices condemned by the report. As a matter of fact, what many of us fail to take into consideration is the tidal wave of ethnic materials, largely in the area of black literature, which threaten to throw us into a situation where racism is not eliminated but possibly perpetuated.

Now I'm certain that there is no way for me to make a statement like that without a careful explanation. The NCTE report essentially calls for increased attention to the literature of non-white minorities (American Indians, Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans). This call was made clearly, and long before, by the minorities themselves, by militant Black students who, tired of witnessing the futile efforts of their more moderate elders, ushered in a period of Black consciousness unparalleled in history. The result was the birth, almost overnight, of an entire new field of study. Courses in Black history and literature have multiplied and on the heels of this movement have come the inevitable cash-conscious publishers—slick and otherwise—who have produced such a flood of material that one must have a practiced eye indeed to sort out that which is worthwhile and authentic.

Bring now into the picture the classroom teacher, the one person who in the final analysis must always put into practice the curriculum, whether it is dictated by the consumer or by the authority on education. *He* must select materials, present them, and help students to draw

from them the sense of identity and self-image we all recognize as necessary. What has happened in practice varies widely depending upon the particular hang-up the teacher has cultivated. Much too often the view is held that Black literature is an exclusive need of Blacks, Mexican literature is for schools in the Southwest, and we don't need books about Puerto Ricans because "we don't have any of them in our schools."

I have been able to distinguish at least four basic teacher types as far as Black literature is concerned. Each is clearly distinguishable by his stance on "the question" which may or may not be related to the teaching of literature. First there is the Soul Brother (Blood), who feels that it is his divine calling to convince these "cats" of what "The Man" has done to us for all these years. Following closely on his heels is the "Right-on Rapper," the ultra-liberal White who feels compelled to do some Black literature to convince the class that he is "with it." For both of these types only Malcolm, LeRoi, Ed, Eldridge and company are important. Then there is the "Good White Folks" type who would argue that Black literature never has been ignored in her class. After all, she gushes, "I just love that poem 'Little Brown Baby' by What's His Name!" The icing on the cake, however, is what modern young Blacks refer to as the "The Oreo Cookie" (black on the outside and white inside). This uncompromisingly middle-class Black lady wants to know what all the fuss is about, why "they" don't quiet down and stop jeopardizing us with all those demands for a Black curriculum. Dunbar's dialect poetry is embarrassing; Malcolm and LeRoi and Eldridge are troublemakers, and Claude Brown should know better than to air our dirty linen in public.

Where and how does the responsible and responsive curriculum developer enter the picture? Courses in Black and other ethnic literature, at high school and college level, for students of all ethnic groups, fill a necessary vacuum. The responsible teacher of literature is not content to dwell only in the present, for his sense of responsibility makes him realize that his students must see as he does the backgrounds of today's struggle in yesterday's literature, and that the development of Black literature in America closely parallels the development of so-called mainstream literature. From the early oral tradition of the sermons of Jonathan Edwards and the sermons of unnamed Black preachers; through the political protests and defiance of [redacted] revolutionaries like Jefferson and Paine and the anti-slavery protests and defiance of literacy laws of William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass; to the questioning social consciousness of social realists like William Dean Howells and Theodore Dreiser and the equally socially conscious though opposite W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington; to the flowering of modern literature in the 20's with Lewis, Hemingway and others and the Harlem Renaissance of Jean Toomer, Claude

McKay and others; to the naturalism of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and Richard Wright's *Native Son;* and into the contemporary scene where Black theatre offers the last hopes of survival to a medium threatened with extinction by crass commercialism—the *responsible* teacher of the Black elective makes his students aware of the development of a distinctive body of literature. Whether his students consider DuBois and Malcolm heroes and Booker T. and Martin Luther King as "Uncle Tom's" is of little consequence except as the students do or do not have a solid basis for forming their opinions. The responsible teacher's concern is for having students recognize the dual pattern of attitudes that is as old as the race question itself: In the face of oppression does one rely upon the innate goodness of mankind and turn the other cheek, or does he engage in open warfare? This is what the evolution of Black literature is all about.

There remains, however, a tremendous job to be done. The void filled by the Black elective is immediate; the longer range goal which must be reached immediately is to place Black literature and all other ethnic literature in proper perspective in the total English curriculum. To keep the literature separate is to do injustice to *all* students. The Black student is reminded insidiously that he and his literature still are separate and different and implicitly less good; both Black and White students are denied a total, clear picture of their literary heritage.

One way that we have tried in Baltimore to integrate the literature program is to use a writing team of teachers and department heads knowledgeable in the literature to produce a curriculum supplement called "Perspectives: Afro-American Literature in a Multi-Ethnic Program". This is one booklet that is designed purposely *not* to be used alone but in conjunction with mainstream materials. In it are twenty-two unit supplements on themes popular among our students. The purpose of this publication is set forth quite eloquently in the introduction:

> One of the major goals of literature teaching should be to help students achieve understanding, empathy, appreciation, and respect for all facets of the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural society in which we live.

It states further:

> To correct these wrongs [of past neglect] is no simple matter. It requires above all a sense of proportion and perspective to prevent a continuation of previous wrongs or a reversal of wrong doing and neglect. This, then, is the purpose of this guide: to expose all students, Black and White, to the literature of all ethnic groups . . . in such a way as to make clear the value of each group's contributions and, in addition, to highlight the similarities—the relationships, weaknesses, strengths, and the line of human experience and behavior that cause us all to share in common the label "human being."

Follow-up to the publication focuses upon teacher education—encouraging teachers to fill in the gaps in their background by reading from a selected list of background materials so that they will know

the literature. Departmental reading programs have been established in many schools, and these, along with the use of the original members of the writing team as consultants, offer some hope of implementation.

I have attempted thus far in this presentation to examine the basic themes that polarize English educators today. Though each of them may be open to criticism because of difficulties involved in implementation, they all have some positive values. The problem and the danger to all of us lies in the tendency of both proponents and followers to consider these approaches as mutually exclusive—to adopt a myopic view which prevents us "blind men" from coming to a rational conclusion as to what our elephant really is.

Perhaps we can best form a basis for describing our elephant by beginning with what he is *not* like. The English curriculum is an animal unlike any other. It does not deal solely with a clearly limited subject matter that can be systematically taught, memorized, tested, and then forgotten. What the behaviorists can offer us, once they are able to get things in perspective, is a clearer delineation of that *portion* of the field that lends itself to systematic, sequential teaching and measurement. English does not and cannot dwell entirely in the realm of intellectual pursuit for its own sake. Any curriculum that bases its structure solely upon the logic of the discipline misses the real aim of English teaching—to develop in each individual, as far as his potential will allow, a lasting maturity, sophistication, and sense of appropriateness in his use of and in his response to the language. What we can take from the logician is a clear sense of what the real content of language instruction is. What to do with that content is dependent upon many variables, the most significant one being the student himself. Finally, though media and other mind-expanding devices must be employed in the methodology of the discipline, they are *not* the discipline. The discipline essentially is communication in all of its various forms. The language of media is but one form of communication, and involved in our approach to media is a new concept of literary form and composition which must be reckoned with. The best values that curriculum makers can take from the entire area are a broadened concept of what communication involves and many new and exciting devices for reaching the deadened nerve centers of students who so long have been inhibited by our strict attention to subject matter and arbitrarily chosen skills rather than to human beings.

But this revitalizing process is only a beginning—a vantage point from which we can launch continued efforts to do what must be done: not to set arbitrary standards for social or moral values but to provide the key to imaginative and effective expression. A sense of values should accrue from the student's experience in an English class, but it is not the primary province of the English teacher to decide what these values shall be.

What, then, is the province of the English teacher and the English curriculum—the basic theme upon which the variations must be played? Let me venture a definition:

• First, the province of the English curriculum is to provide through literature in its broadest definition and scope (including a balance of traditional and contemporary written literature and the "new" literature of the media) enlightening experiences that will help each student to develop his own personal insights into the life experience.

• Second, it is to approach the teaching of language (again in *its* broadest definition) with only one surety: that diversity is the rule in language usage, that the concept of "looking it up in the dictionary," the historical graveyard of words, must be replaced by a sense of appropriate choice from a storehouse of language alternatives of that mode of communication considered most effective for the consequence one desires or is willing to hazard.

[Considered in the light of these first two concepts of curriculum the problem of censorship takes on a whole new proportion. We must fight to protect the student's right to read, but we must also exhibit a sense of responsibility that prevents us from making deliberate choices of material on any artificial basis, whether it be for the shock effect of four-letter words or the intellectual snobbery of hundred dollar words. We must have the tenacity of purpose that enables us to select materials which do two things very well: enlighten the life experience through their content and keep in perspective the concept of language alternatives as being neither bad nor good except as they are appropriate to the writer's purpose.]

• Third, it is to help the student to perceive speaking and writing as a conversation with an audience, whether that audience be himself or someone else. This conversation must be perceived as involving a distinct motive or purpose, a message to be conveyed, and a choice of alternative strategies for conveying that message.

• Finally, and most important, we must view each innovative practice, whether it be elementary departmentalization, open space, year-round schools, or student electives, as a device that will work only if it is looked at in terms of the real values other than novelty that will accrue for students and only if backed up by an unswerving sense of the teacher's role as enabler, as one who does not impart knowledge but reveals it; as one who does not change behavior but who serves as a catalyst, providing an environment in which change is possible; as one who does not indoctrinate in terms of rules for language choice or values for interpreting life, but employs the technique of inductive revelation—the *sine qua non* of effective teaching—to enable the student to form his own generalizations and determine his own values.

The call, I believe, is clear. Our current fanatical search for the innovative and the new is but a temporary and delaying device—one

that will be seen through as have all other such disguises. We must now be at a point in the process of educational evolution comparable to that of the evolution mankind himself, who must have at some point been forced by the elements into gaining a clear vision of what he was, who he was, and where he was going, and as a result instinctively altered his position from a no longer useful crawl to an erect stance undergirded by two firmly planted feet.

The choice is ours to make and time is running out. Either we gain that clear sense of purpose or we face inevitable and irrevocable extinction such as that which befell the mastodon, who, as science tells us, was another elephant who experienced some difficulty in defining himself.

Baltimore City Public Schools

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